

PUTTING IT BACK TOGETHER

National Guard efforts bring Gulf Coast, Camp Beauregard back online after Katrina



Guard teams repair and replace downed telephone wires and poles at Camp Beauregard, La.

"Most of the team members made a trip to New Orleans but our work was concentrated in central Louisiana to help relocate and restore military installations."



Courtesy photos

By Lt. Col. James Loux
Commander, 217th Engineering and Installation Squadron

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — During a recent training weekend, I was talking to one of the guys who deployed in support of Hurricane Katrina Relief efforts and asked if he had made it to New Orleans. He said he did and that he took his camera, but he couldn't capture the total devastation, smell, sound or feeling of despair that he saw and felt.

In the face of the devastation left by Katrina, the National Guard responded with units from all across the country. Engineering and Installation units deployed throughout the coastal states to repair and restore communications to meet near and longer term needs. It was truly a group effort and demonstrated the Guard at its best.

Our unit deployed teams to Camp Beauregard near Alexandria, La. This and Gillis Long Center, Carville, La., are the relocation sites for many of Louisiana's military installations. **Serving alongside us at Camp Beauregard, La., were E&I specialists of the 270th EIS from Pennsylvania, 218th EIS from Missouri, 241st EIS from Tennessee, 219th EIS from Oklahoma, 272nd EIS from Texas, 130th EIS from Utah and the 205th EIS from Oklahoma.**

Our teams repaired and restored damaged communications and provided the infrastructure to expand the number of relocated users at each location. A good portion of the work at Camp Beauregard was to restore aerial communications. This required removal of damaged poles, installation of new poles and stringing cable throughout the base. Even though we had to remove or trim trees, clean out duct banks and manholes, the trip was very gratifying, and the total team performed at the top of its game.

85th EIS picks up the pieces



Rebuilding a community

By 2nd Lt. Aaron Chen
85th Engineering and Installation Squadron

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — Just hours after Hurricane Katrina slammed ashore on the Gulf Coast, specialists from the 85th Engineering Installation Squadron went straight to work.

Because the unit is accustomed to working in adverse weather conditions as part of their normal duties installing and maintaining cable infrastructure and electronic communication systems, the team put its experience to work carrying out relief efforts and offering support wherever possible. Backhoes, dump trucks, forklifts, and generators along with various other E&I special purpose vehicles were used as essential tools for debris removal, road clearing and reconstruction.

The recovery efforts of the 85th EIS also extended outside the gates into the local community. Following the storm, Tech. Sgt. Chad Goldston coordinated with base officials to begin clearing the roads for first-responders. Sergeant Goldston, fellow members of the 85th and other base personnel used backhoes to clear roads stemming from the interstate all the way back to the base.

"While we were removing all the debris from the streets, people would ask us to help clear some wreckage off their yard, or help them in some way," Sergeant Goldston said, "we did all we could to help the community, but it was really hard talking to those who lost everything."

Though it took working long hours for days on end, his team was able to provide safe passage for numerous relief workers and officials.

Despite the damage caused by Katrina, routine unit operations resumed 30 days after the storm, and even though the past few months have been marked by many individual struggles and hardships, everyone here has gained something especially valuable—pride in rebuilding the community and restoring a way of life.

The 85th EIS united with the rest of Keesler and other communities to achieve a common goal — restore the Gulf Coast by rebuilding lives disrupted by the storm.